

Human Services Committee
Legislative Office
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

S.B. No. 17 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES.

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee,

As the Executive Director of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, I champion causes that pertain to oral health care and coverage. I am concerned about the inevitable affect that Governor Malloy's proposed State Budget will have on residents covered by HUSKY, specifically the 5.75% cuts at the Department of Social Services (DSS), cuts to over 1000 state jobs and the cut to orthodontia for children on Medicaid.

People who reside in our cities and towns will be affected by the 5.75% cuts at the Department of Social Services (DSS), and without legislator's input, **these cuts could further jeopardize the advancements in health care for those covered by Medicaid.** The DSS has improved the processing of Medicaid over this last year. If any of the Governor's proposals to cut over 1000 state jobs were to occur at DSS, we would see a return to the poor service that legally jeopardized DSS just a couple of years ago. The problems with the untimely processing of applications and delayed redeterminations results in eligible individuals without benefits and services. I feel it necessary to remind you that this will only worsen if the staffing at DSS processing centers and regional offices is decreased. Presently, DSS has vacancies which need to be filled promptly. **We are asking you to consider alternative budget adjustments and maintain HUSKY as the successful program it is for our state's residents.**

The Governor's proposed cut to orthodontia for children on Medicaid is a further setback to the program, as last year's adjustment on the Salzmann Scale from 24 to 26 points has already **harmed many children in need of this service.** It is extremely important to note, the Salzmann Scale was not developed for use as a cut off for whether a child received orthodontic treatment or not, it is a diagnostic tool. The Salzmann scale is intended to disclose whether a handicapping malocclusion is present and to assess its severity. Malocclusion is when the teeth do not align, causing difficulty or discomfort when biting or chewing, speech difficulties, mouth breathing, jaw disorders and tooth decay. Connecticut is only one of nine states that use the scale to determine appropriateness for coverage.

If we continue to use the Salzmann Scale to legally determine whether HUSKY will support this level of care, we need to keep the requirement at 26 and at least consider altering the statute's language. At the level of 26 points, children have malocclusions that can cause current and future oral health, medical, mental, behavioral or emotional problems. Altering the orthodontia statute's language, which is currently more restrictive than other Medicaid language used in the statutes, will assist those who need orthodontic service with accessing orthodontia services.

A possible alternative might be to **remove** this language:

“... including (1) documentation of the presence of other severe deviations affecting the oral facial structures; and (2) the presence of severe mental, emotional or behavioral problems or disturbances, as defined in the most current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, that affects the individual's daily functioning.”

And **replace** it with: “... based on the definition of medical necessity applicable to Medicaid services in Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 17b-259b.”

In conclusion, Dental Medicaid and Medicaid’s Person-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) programs are a success in addressing the health of your constituents covered by Medicaid and has proven its worth in many ways, including reductions in costs. As a member of the State Innovation Model’s Practice Transformation Task Force for two years, we work towards the Triple Aim of increasing the quality of care, decreasing costs and improving population health. These two programs under Medicaid, Dental and PCMH, exemplify what can be done in Connecticut. Please do not allow the budget proposal to affect these successes.

I am available to address any of your concerns or respond to questions you have.

Sincerely,

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